



Review of *Civic Engagement in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*.

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As the new millennium dawned, it became clear that American higher education had done some serious soul-searching in light of concerns that it was losing distinctiveness in pursuit of prestige. Moreover, many institutions began returning to their roots in response to exhortations to take a new leadership role in preparing students for active, responsible citizenship. Ernest Boyer struck a responsive chord when he proposed the scholarship of engagement as a means whereby the academy would employ its considerable resources to tackle the social, civic, and ethical problems that beset our communities (Boyer, 1996). In 1999, higher education leaders across the country articulated their commitment to the civic purposes of their institutions as vital agents and architects of a flourishing democracy (Campus Compact, 2000). The present decade has witnessed a widespread renewal of higher education's historical commitment to public engagement and the growth of service-learning as a pedagogical approach to developing civic knowledge and skills. However, much work remains to be done. Social problems persist, locally and globally; today's youth view political involvement with skepticism; civic learning is lacking, or lagging. That is the basis of *Civic Engagement in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*.

Barbara Jacoby, the editor and lead author, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this work. She had already demonstrated, through two previous books—*Service-Learning in Higher Education* (1996) and *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning* (2003)—a deep understanding of higher education's civic mission and expertise in developing strategies to engage campus stakeholders in the wider community. Jacoby selected as associate authors an

admirable team of educators and researchers whose contributions, taken together, give comprehensive coverage to a topic that is at the forefront of contemporary higher education. Despite the strides being made in establishing pertinent programs, civic engagement remains an ambiguous concept, much bandied about on campuses. With a strong endorsement from Thomas Ehrlich, the highly respected senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, this book adds conceptual clarity to civic engagement and presents a variety of approaches adopted by U.S. colleges and universities. Ehrlich's (2000) *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* was perhaps the most comprehensive book on this subject, providing inspiration for new, innovative programs designed to foster civic engagement.

This book is divided into 13 chapters, starting with an overview of civic engagement in today's higher education and ending with an examination of two sets of strategies for securing the future of institutional civic engagement. The other chapters present different approaches to civic engagement in university and college settings. The less-than-concise definition of *civic engagement* given in the first chapter reflects the difficulty in defining the concept. Readers will appreciate the list of specific actions that constitute civic engagement provided in that chapter. Chapter 2 includes recent data on college students' civic, electoral, and "political voice" activities. The third chapter is particularly informative as it explicates the "Civic Learning Spiral," designed as an approach to educating students for participation in a diverse democracy, and delineates associated civic learning outcomes. Such outcomes include adeptness at critical thinking, conflict resolution, and cooperative methods as well as skills in deliberation, dialogue, and community building.

Successive chapters focus on civic engagement in relation to first-year college programs, the general education curriculum, integrative and interdisciplinary learning, capstones, intercultural education, leadership development, service-learning pedagogy, community-based research, and international programs. In "Moving from Service-Learning to Civic Engagement," the chapter author discusses new service-learning models that emphasize social change and social justice. Such terms as *service-politics* and *justice-learning* have been added to the civic engagement lexicon even as many institutions shy away from paradigms that could be construed as reflecting partisan liberal activism. In the final chapter, the coauthors propose a research agenda that considers the effects of civic engagement on individual participants, the institution, and both local and global communities; the development of related theories; and effective program models.

Civic engagement programs are built on the foundation of university–community partnerships (Soska & Johnson Butterfield, 2004); and effective partnerships are characterized by authenticity, mutuality, and reciprocity (Jacoby, 2003). As suggested by the authors of the chapter on the first college year, expanding partnerships between academic affairs and student affairs to include community representatives is appropriate for supporting the civic component of first-year programs. Regarding community-based research, partnerships engage campus and community agents in research projects that address a community-identified question or issue. Authentic, sustained partnerships provide fertile ground for engaged scholarship and for

teaching that involves active-learning pedagogies. As Jacoby and Elizabeth Hollander explain in the concluding chapter of the book,

Such partnerships require institutional infrastructure and resources that allow the community to engage with the institution as a whole rather than only with individuals or marginalized programs. They also eschew the traditional one-way expert or outreach models, instead valuing community expertise and shared responsibility in the pursuit of mutually beneficial goals. (p. 230)

Administrative and academic leaders, program directors in both academic affairs and student affairs, and faculty members will find this book useful in their work. It is a resource guide for creating and developing civic engagement initiatives, which can be linked to existing curricular and co-curricular programs. For example, faculty across disciplines can design capstones to engage students in addressing social issues and analyzing public policy. Student affairs professionals, for their part, can draw on the institutional examples of good practice in implementing first-year programs that integrate social, civic, and academic dimensions.

In addition to the institutional case examples highlighting “best practices” in civic engagement, important features of this book are profiles of innovative programs and references to resources available to support program development. Further, although each chapter is essentially a stand-alone essay, the book is organized sequentially and there are ample cross-references in the chapters. What this publication lacks in pictorial or diagrammatic illustrations, the text makes up for with a good balance between description and analysis.

While *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* is quite comprehensive and instructive, it does not include a chapter on assessment. Although there are many publications dealing with assessment in higher education, readers of this book would benefit from a chapter focusing on how to gauge civic learning and document relevant outcomes—knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions—in measurable terms. Furthermore, whereas it is acknowledged that “[f]aculty members are in the best position to make the case for building civic learning and engagement into the curriculum” (p. 240), this book does not satisfactorily address the challenges and complexity of achieving civic engagement goals in the context of faculty roles and rewards. To be sure, unless the reward system, especially promotion and tenure guidelines, supports civic engagement as a strategy for teaching/learning and scholarship, faculty will not fully embrace engagement. This book, nevertheless, delivers what it promises: practical guidance in designing programs that incorporate civic learning and prepare students to become civically engaged during their college years and beyond.

In the first decade of the new millennium, there is much evidence that American colleges and universities have renewed their commitment to their civic mission. Beyond the rhetoric are impressive examples of efforts to move civic engagement from the periphery to the center of institutional life. *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* contains such examples and information that can inspire other institutions to improve their programs and practice. A timely and

valuable addition to the literature, *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* elucidates the multifaceted concept, offers insights and guidelines for designing and expanding programs that encourage civic learning, and suggests strategies for creating a campus-wide culture of engagement. This book is essential reading for administrators, staff, and faculty and an excellent resource for preparing students for lives of civic responsibility in a global, democratic society.

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